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## London, the Post-7/7 Bond Films, and Mourning Work

Christopher Holliday

Daniel Craig's tenure as 007 has spotlighted the expanded role played by London as a patriotic (and nostalgic) symbol of ideological work that has reasserted notions of Empire and British national identity within the wider global imaginary. Whether positioned as emblematic of the London 2012 Olympics (Brittany 5), a response to the crisis of Britain inaugurated by the Scottish referendum (Macmillan 191-206), or as reflective of a post-9/11 geopolitical climate (Dodds 115-130), London's increasing role in *Casino Royale* (Campbell 2006), *Quantum of Solace* (Forster 2008), *Skyfall* (Mendes 2012) and *Spectre* (Mendes 2015) is a notable departure for the film series in how their narratives have exploited, sourced, and articulated the British capital's monumental iconography.

Supported by the Bond series' many colonial and post-colonial encounters that affirm 007's status as a "global policeman" (Baron 163), London in the Bond films has traditionally been relegated to a position of professional/domestic/personal rather than exotic/foreign/other. However, with London now featuring prominently as one of the series' major film locations rather than glimpsed as a "fleeting" presence (Funnell and Dodds 199), this commentary contends that the torn skylines of a levelled capital are reflected in Craig's performance as the damaged British spy who is no longer the agile, hyper-mobile secret agent of his predecessors. The invocation of a post-7/7 London in trauma throughout the Craig-era positions Bond as the ideal character to 'work through' the ordeal of terrorist activity. Through its expression of a capital under destructive duress, Craig-era Bond films have ultimately rehabilitated post-7/7 London's fallen identity and precarious position on terror alert.

## London Calling?

In his account of *Quantum of Solace*, Stephen Mulhall examines how “The exotic locations so familiar from earlier Bond films, and indeed from *Casino Royale*, also take on a very different cast in *Quantum of Solace*. Instead of the gorgeous beaches, sparkling water, and glamorous hotels of Nassau or Venice, we get the working port and the impoverished street life of Port au Prince; instead of lush Montenegrin landscapes, we get the stony deserts of Bolivia” (112). The “utterly arid and inhospitable” (ibid.) portrayal of nature in *Quantum of Solace*, which underscores the film’s environmental narrative, extends to the film’s treatment of an equally barren, uninviting London. The capital first appears cloudy and drenched in rain in a scene immediately following the assassination attempt made by double agent Craig Mitchell on M and Bond in the underground sewers of Siena, Italy. The cut from Tuscan Siena to Mitchell’s grey and grimy high rise central London flat is signalled through the appearance of onscreen text, as the ornate calligraphy of the preceding ‘Siena’ intertitle is replaced by the word ‘London’ chiselled into the dark grey asphalt surface of the rain-soaked road. The next appearance of the British capital makes this distinction between European locales all the more apparent. *Quantum of Solace* moves abruptly between the scorching reds and sun-bleached oranges of Haiti to the imposing grey concrete structures of London’s Barbican Estate. Doubling here as the MI6 Headquarters, the Barbican complex is a striking exemplar of postwar Brutalist architecture, a raw design style marked by exposed concrete facades, mottled grey stonework, multi-level walkways and elevations, cantilevered floors, and an imposing geometric design that befits a government building devoted to spying.

Among *Quantum of Solace*’s many “site-specific encounters” (Dittmer and Dodds 77), the depiction of London as smudged, soiled and unglamorous bears out Bond’s own grief in the wake of Vesper Lynd’s suicide, and as a direct sequel to *Casino Royale*, clearly functions as an elegy for 007’s deceased love. Bond’s emotional turmoil is visually signified

throughout the film via its frenetic pacing, reliance on “intensified continuity” editing (Bordwell 16-28) and bombastic narrative momentum. For Johannes Binotto, however, 007’s mournful condition complicates its specific portrayal of London. In contrast to its brutalist exterior, the glossy glass-panelled interior of the MI6 Headquarters becomes a primary site of informational “contradiction” (54), a place in which planes of action and point of view become irretrievably blurred by the obtrusive overlapping of background and foreground spaces. So while the drab and dreary articulation of ‘outside’ London in the rain (in the form of Mitchell’s apartment and the Barbican’s brutalism) paints a melancholic image of a capital shedding its own tears in a ceremonial act of ablution, its interior spaces present a “gratuitous exercise in style” (Binotto 57) that no less allegorises Bond’s internal conflict within its contradictory *mise-en-scene*.

The re-mapping of London in *Quantum of Solace* is not purely mournful to the passing of Lynd, but is firmly entrenched in a stronger melancholic introspection that psychologises the historical events of London as a city. The elegiac London in *Quantum of Solace*, followed by the capital’s ruination in *Skyfall* and *Spectre*, mythologize London’s relationship to the ‘7/7’ terrorist attacks. The Craig-era is not singularly embroiled in “victimhood and a politics of blame,” or even “righteous indignation” towards the terrorist atrocities (Elsaesser 194), but entwines national memory and history together with a catharsis of representation. The relationships between cinema, trauma and collective national memory are made all the more striking when considering the formal re-coding of London as a desirable *destination* rather than simply a *location*, and the image of the capital that needs, even demands, Bond to be its much-needed saviour.

Daniel Craig was announced as the new Bond in the shadow of Tower Bridge on the banks of the River Thames on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2005, a little over 3 months after the terror attacks had irretrievably shaped the city. On the morning of Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005, London was

subjected to four co-ordinated bombings across its tube network, with one additional attack on a London bus at Russell Square in the heart of Central London. Curtailing the capital's euphoria at being awarded the 2012 Olympic Games only 24 hours earlier, these attacks were followed two weeks later by another four attempted bombs directed at London's transport system. The 7/7 atrocities presented a hostile vision of the capital as an increasingly vulnerable and immediate target for terrorist activity, accounting for 52 civilian deaths and over 700 injured.

However, the 7/7 attacks on London afford the opportunity to stage an encounter between national tragedy and Craig's particular iteration of 007. While Pierce Brosnan's public announcement as James Bond took place in London's Regent Hotel, Craig's public reveal unfolded on a speedboat piloted by the Royal Marines down the River Thames, though Craig's life jacket undercut for some journalists the brio of the character (Sillito, n.pag). Not since the promotional images marking the casting of George Lazenby for *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (Hunt 1969) had a Bond actor been so explicitly tied to his mastery of London's geography. Craig's Bond, like the Thames, was shown to literally run through the heart of the city. Beyond the Thames' historical associations with the fluency of Britain's post-Empire imperial change (Brunsdon 186)—making it the ideal location to negotiate the Brosnan-to-Craig switch—the continued intersection of Craig's Bond and/as London has marked the contemporary Bond era with explicit traces of the 7/7 attacks.

The possibility of viewing Craig-era Bond as conducting mourning work on behalf of a collective cultural memory can be strongly allied to Craig's body as a loaded emblem of the capital's post-7/7 condition. Given Craig's hyper-masculinity and unprecedented muscular physique (Baker 13-26; Chapman 149-169; Cox 184-196; Dodds 115-130; Funnell 455-472; Omry 115-130), the synonymy between his Bond and London makes available a shared loss through physical trauma. Colleen Tremonte and Linda Racioppi argue that in *Casino Royale*,

“The level of violence and brutality that James – the embodiment of Britain – suffers is grizzlier than in previous Cold War films” (185). Placed under physical duress throughout the film, the spectacle of Bond’s suffering body, if not his abundant masculinity, can be understood as analogous to the “physical blows” experienced by London in July 2005. Le Chiffre’s taunting to an imprisoned Bond as to whether he will “yield in time” seems particularly pertinent given, as Klaus Dodds argues, “after the 7/7 attacks, the then-Blair government paid tribute to the ‘stoicism’ and ‘resilience’ of Londoners” (119). Bond’s white heterosexual body in *Casino Royale* thus marks the intersection of gender and international security, a broken and disturbed site of masculinity. London has suffered, and so Bond must suffer too.

*Casino Royale* further plays out a terrorist narrative in the immediate aftermath of the 7/7 atrocities. The film’s first two action sequences involve Bond’s pursuit of two bombers (Mollaka and Carlos), indicating a new form of post-millennial villainy suitable for Bond’s detection. Making his personal (rather than professional) objectives even clearer, 007 surmises to M regarding Mollaka’s death that “I thought one less bomb maker in the world would be a good thing.” At other junctures too *Casino Royale* readily invokes the iconography of modern cyberterrorism. As Richard Medina and George F. Hepner argue, “Mobile phones provide terrorists with greater opportunities for operational efficiency and communications when carrying out an attack” (171). Mollaka’s rucksack (containing a bomb and phone with the codename “ellipsis”) recalls the use of mobile devices as detonators or triggers in the plotting of terror attacks. Bond’s handling of the phone and deciphering of the bomb attack at Miami Airport likewise narrativises the prominent role played by cellular communication in implementing pre-arranged code words for terrorist activity.

Given the post-7/7 narrative of *Casino Royale*, the “inconsolable rage” expressed by Bond at the death of Lynd in *Quantum of Solace* can be reoriented as no less a mourning for

London. What is immediately striking about *Quantum of Solace* is the pervasive funereal imagery that envelops its initial portrayal of the city, almost as if commemorating its passing. The etching of ‘London’ into the ground during its first appearance evokes a solitary headstone, while Bond himself arrives by chauffeur in a blacked-out Range Rover as if leading a funeral procession. Once inside the concrete apartment complex, 007 walks down a corridor tiled in grey before entering into Mitchell’s monochrome apartment decorated with white walls, grey curtains and modern silver and black appliances. Both Bond and M wear black too as if laying a body to rest; Bond reprises a similar outfit to Marco Sciarra’s funeral in *Spectre*, while M wears a comparable high-necked black coat to the memorial service of the agents killed by the bombing of M16 in *Skyfall*.

In *Quantum of Solace*, M is mourning her relationship with the treacherous Mitchell, her long-time bodyguard and ‘trusted’ friend. However, the melancholic tone to the film is significantly articulated through its unremittingly bleak portrayal of London. Fractured and fissured, *Quantum of Solace*’s London is dampened by Bond’s anger, ambivalence, and dejection. Eschewing the economy of “landmark London” (Brunsdon 21), the film chooses to ignore the capital’s iconic geography, and instead looks beyond its historical markings to define London as a vulnerable space no longer impervious to infiltration. The pervasive theme of “resurrection” present in *Skyfall* is therefore crucial to understanding how the film’s eruption of a resilient nationalist discourse functions as a cathartic release of national trauma.

### **“Who do you fear”?: Bond and Spectral Times**

The revival of Bond’s “patriotic code” (Chapman 158) in *Skyfall* and its celebration of national values has been widely documented (Anderson 1-27; Dodds 115-130; Macmillan 191-206). Yet *Skyfall* follows *Casino Royale* in recalling terrorist imagery to approximate the anxieties of a contemporaneous Western audience clued into the global war on terror. James

Smith draws a parallel between the explosion at MI6 waged by Silva and the Real IRA attacks in 2000 “when a rocket was fired from a public park into MI6’s building” (165). Bond’s extended pursuit of Silva (dressed as a policeman) across the London Underground directly recalls the architectural trauma inflicted on the tube system during 7/7. Framing the underground as susceptible, the spectacular ravaging of *Skyfall*’s London—from the collapse of the underground tube network to the destruction waged upon MI6—all leans heavily on the iconography of post-7/7 London’s ruination.

Despite the “potential sensitivity of exploiting these still recent London attacks for a British film” (Smith 165), *Skyfall*’s 7/7 discourse can be mapped onto Bond himself as bearer of the nation. As Macmillan puts it, “Much like Arthur, Bond dies but is fated to return messianically when Britain needs him most. [...] Britain has survived, but not unscathed” (197). Once again, Craig’s wounded body becomes metonymic of how London has been ravaged by trauma, particularly in the scenes in which Bond lies slumped after physical exercise, fails his evaluation and appears aged, especially when joined on screen with the much younger Q. Dodds connects *Skyfall*’s treatment of Craig as potentially having “lost a step” (as Gareth Mallory intimates) explicitly to the fallout from the 7/7 attacks:

There is [...] another aspect to the 7/7 quality of the film: its focus on resilience as opposed to fragility—and a form of resilience that ultimately rewards both a flag-waving belligerence (demonstrating resolve) and a sense of restraint (not acting like the terrorists and killing indiscriminately, for example). (119).

The secret agent’s triumphant “resurrection” in *Skyfall* releases the valve on London’s still-raw history, whilst commemorating “with pleasure” 007’s renewed patriotism. Despite his wounded appearance in the film, Bond’s resilience is tied to *Skyfall*’s celebratory portrayal of London and the many “lingering shots of the cityscape” (ibid. 119). Indeed, as Bond is shot



and injured in Turkey during the film's pre-credits sequence, which prompts M to stare mournfully out over the River Thames at 007's assumed demise, London also seems to react to Bond's presumed passing. The presentation of the capital as once more grey and rain-streaked here "symbolizes the tears M must contain for Britain's fallen son" (Kunze 241). The rain-soaked capital, notably when M writes Bond's obituary, further suggests a city still in mourning. By *Skyfall*'s end, however, the triumphant image of a resurrected Bond surveying London's rooftops makes explicit the film's investment in a "post-7/7 'we'" (Weber 707). *Skyfall* openly marks London's journey from breach to rejuvenation, the imposition of order and drawing of closure onto "the breakdown in the imagination of British security" ushered in by the 7/7 attacks (Weber 688). However, the strong patterns of continuity across the Craig-era not only support the re-mapping of *Skyfall*'s pervasive "7/7 quality" back onto *Casino Royale* and *Quantum of Solace*, but also forward to Craig's fourth Bond film *Spectre*. As an explicit culmination of the events first established in *Casino Royale*, *Spectre* and its articulation of a ruined London emerges as explicitly "haunted" by the Craig-era master narrative that seems to perform London's mourning work.

Themes of 'haunting' certainly mark *Spectre* from its opening images. Prior to the film's standout pre-credit sequence that documents in one long take the 'Day of the Dead' parade through Mexico's Zocalo Square, the opening gun barrel motif is followed by onscreen text announcing "The dead...are alive." This statement recalls Bond's resurrection established in *Skyfall* (with 007 ironically dressed here as a skeleton), whilst making explicit chronological shifts that meld together past and present. Following the macabre Día de Muertos procession, Sam Smith's title song opens with "I've been here before," verbalising concerns of repetition, which are in turn revisited with lyrics such as "A million shards of glass that haunt me from my past." *Spectre*'s title song is accompanied by images from Craig's previous three Bond films, and reflected in the disintegrating glass are characters

already dead but here raised. The brief intertextual presence of Silva, Lynd, Le Chiffre, and finally Dench's M haunt the film's musical number, transforming it into another macabre 'Day of the Dead' parade. Dench's posthumous appearance via video recording later in the film provides *Spectre* with another ghostly apparition, whilst her spectral presence anticipates the photographs of Le Chiffre, Silva, Lynd, Mr. White, and M that appear as shooting range targets on the walls of the abandoned MI6 headquarters during the *Spectre*'s climax.

Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar's notion of "haunted" cinema (38) is a potential heuristic through which to engage with the many spectres of *Spectre*. Their "haunted" cinema model performs the task of acknowledging the film's intertextual reliance upon earlier Craig Bonds, but also the potential retrospective narration (across his four films) of traumatic national history. Berry and Farquhar argue that haunted cinema can be understood as a "realm of films where past, present, and future collapse into each other" (39). The co-presence of disparate temporalities often manifests a postcolonial condition predicated on colonial modernity that is "always haunted by the culture of the colonized" (39). Bliss Cua Lim expands on this notion by arguing that "the spectral temporality of haunting" results in the "presumed boundaries between past, present, and future [...] to be shockingly permeable" (288). Such a ghostly understanding of linearity refutes the homogeneous time and forward momentum of modernity in favour of a more disruptive arrangement of chronological simultaneity. Designed by Daniel Kleinman, the opening credit sequence to *Spectre* overlays images of the past to splinter—through the image of fracturing glass—the time structures of the film. This recodes the sequence as a stylish "spectral surface" (Lim 291) rooted in non-linearity and past/present fusion.

The "haunted" quality of *Spectre* ultimately remembers the urban brutality waged on Britain's capital. Much like *Skyfall*, the London of *Spectre* is suitably "damaged goods" that again openly reflects Bond's emotional scars and "traumatic history" (Baker 22-24). Shot

mostly at night, *Spectre*'s capital is the fulcrum of the narrative, carefully positioned within its global expanse that includes Mexico City, Rome, Tokyo and Tangiers. Following the staple M/Bond exchange inside the imperial centre of M's office, *Spectre* returns to London for the final confrontation with Franz Oberhauser. Although not a literal ghost figure, Oberhauser certainly encapsulates a reminder of "disenchanted time and the spectral temporality of haunting" (Lim 288). Believed by Q to be "dead and buried," he is a radically destabilising force from Bond's past that unsteadies Bond's present. As Oberhauser/Ernst Stavro Blofeld (head of SPECTRE as well as Bond's adoptive brother) admits to his sibling, "I've really put you through it." Terrorism is, then, quite literally a spectre that haunts London, a capital that is struggling to defend itself from the tentacular reach of encroaching global sabotage.

*Spectre*'s London is an environment that requires Bond's mastery in the interests of national security and post-Snowden global intelligence. This includes the familiar space of MI6, which through its redecoration with images from Bond's past becomes a liminal space between life and death, agency and decay. Although Bond's employers are dismissed by Silva early in *Skyfall* as nothing more than a "ruin," in *Spectre* the MI6 building stands, though not for very long, as a damaged reminder of what Bond (and London) has been through. Lamented by Tanner as a "poor old girl," the abandoned government building lies derelict and ready for demolition, a wasteland with a crumbling façade that is finally put down by Oberhauser under the watchful gaze of M, Q, Moneypenny, and Tanner. What infuses the portrayal of MI6 with the spirit of post-7/7 London here is the optimism of achievable resilience, which is measured not by the shifting urban architecture open to Silva/Oberhauser's violent assaults, but by the "flag-waving belligerence (demonstrating resolve)" of its people (Dodds 119). Just as "the British government's message [to Londoners was] to carry on with our daily lives in the face of terrorism" (Weber 707), MI6 'lives on'

ready to withstand through the resilience of its people and the formidability of its employees housed in their “new digs.”

### **James Bond Will Return?**

Bond (as phenomenon, series, and character) has always manifested cultural realities and anxieties, which in today’s post-Cold War “global situation” (Hochscherf 299) hinges upon terrorist domination, homeland security, surveillance, and nanotechnology as increasingly threatening. Taken together, *Casino Royale*, *Quantum of Solace*, *Skyfall* and *Spectre* plot a sequence of articulation, solace, restoration, and retrieval that, through the figure of Bond as national saviour, ultimately plays out the trauma of post-7/7 London. Bond’s assault, succour, renewal, and troubled identity across Craig’s four films can be mapped onto their fluctuating portrayals of London. The July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005 attacks inadvertently coded Craig’s Bond as national saviour (at the expense of female characters that conventionally bear out Bond’s masculinized colonial impetus), and his identity as post-7/7 protector is intimately linked to the consecutive portrayal of London in each of Craig’s four films. Indeed, the Craig-era displays little amnesia towards the events of 7/7, but rather hold an identity firmly located in investigating the condition of London’s post-7/7 moment. In the end of *Spectre*, Bond drives away with Swann at dawn from the city, a final shot that in omitting colleagues Moneypenny and Mallory prioritises 007’s non-professional life, seems to neatly book-end Craig’s own arrival into the role along the Thames. With continued speculation that Craig’s tenure as Bond is now over, and with his rehabilitation of the capital complete, when it comes to the defence of the realm, it seems his work here might just be done.

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